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REMARKS

Claims 1-12 and 17-19 remain in the application.

Claims 13-16 are canceled following the finality of the restriction requirement.

Claims 1-12 and 17-19 are currently amended.

In Item 3, the Examiner maintains the rejection of claims 1-12 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Tucker (U.S. Patent No. 5,045,374). Reconsideration is respectfully requested on the following grounds.

Tucker discloses a stiff plastic strip providing reinforcement for longitudinal edges at which interior drywall surfaces meet. The strips are not completely flexible, nor are they extremely rigid like metal (see col. 4, lines 20-23). However, throughout the description, the strip is referred to as "*stiff*", the stiffness of the strip being necessary for the strip to perform its function of reinforcement. The strip is formed of an elongated length 12 of stiff, water-impervious plastic defining a central region 14 and a pair of laterally directed flanges 16,18 extending in diverging fashion from the central region 14 (see col. 5, lines 41-49). In some embodiments, a stiffening bead is formed in the central region, since the central region "*often requires stiffening since it does not reside in contact throughout with a wall surface*" (see col. 4, lines 51-54). In addition, the strips are adapted to be used with drywall surfaces, requiring the addition of drywall tape over the flanges and drywall, and the application of paste-like plastering mud over the tape and strip (see col. 6, lines 22-35). As such, although the flanges are made of water-impervious plastic, there is no indication that the flanges are adherable to the drywall surface in a watertight manner.

Therefore, it is submitted that at least independent claim 1 as presently amended recites structure which is patentably distinct from the prior-art device disclosed by Tucker, and thus that independent claim 1 as presently submitted is both novel and inventive thereover. It is also submitted that, at least in view of their dependence on claim 1, dependent claims 2-12 are also both novel and inventive over Tucker.

In item 4, the Examiner maintains the rejection of claims 17-19 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Zellinger (U.S. Patent No. 4,837,997). Reconsideration is respectfully requested on the following grounds.

Zellinger discloses a corner piece 62 disposed over the ends of two horizontal sealing strips 20,22 and a the end of a vertical sealing strip 24 to cover exposed

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spaces 52,54,56 between the ends of the strips (see Figure 2). The corner piece 62 overlaps the vertical strip 24 (see col. 3, lines 9-11 and Figure 3) and the horizontal strips 20,22 (see col. 3, lines 23-27 and Figure 3). The corner piece 62 is not a template, as it merely covers an intersection of the joints and straight ends of the nearby strips, thus eliminating the need for the ends of the strips to be cut to a shape where they would be connectable to conceal the intersection. Moreover, the corner piece 62 does not provide guiding edges defining a shape for the ends of the strips which is appropriate for the ends to be connected to each other to conceal the intersection of the joints.

Therefore it is submitted that at least independent claim 17 as presently amended recites structure which is patentably distinct from the prior-art device disclosed by Zellinger, and thus that independent claim 17 as presently submitted is both novel and inventive thereover. It is also submitted that, at least in view of their dependence on claim 17, dependent claims 18-19 are also both novel and inventive over Zellinger.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, this application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and early notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

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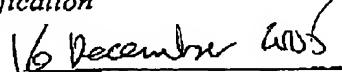
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